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Latin names of other standard works are also mentioned, but prominence is given to the English names. A number of introduced trees are included, such as European larch and yew, English and Scotch elm, sycamore and Norway maple, ailanthus, and others.

ALFRED GUNDERSEN.

**Mosher's Grasses of Illinois**

Dr. Edna Mosher's Grasses of Illinois (Bulletin No. 205 of the University of Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station) is the most notable contribution to the agrostology of the Middle West since the publication of Pammel, Ball and Scribner's Grasses of Iowa, and the first complete list of the grasses of the state since that of Lapham in 1857. In the sixty years since the appearance of Lapham's catalogue, the number of species known to exist within the limits of the state has almost doubled. The present publication lists 204 species, representing 63 genera. Many of these species are recent introductions, to which attention is here called for the first time. The author has very carefully verified all specimens cited, and has added some valuable comments on the economic side. The book is not a mere catalogue, but is prefaced by a brief and untechnical discussion of the structure of grasses that will make it of value as an introductory text-book. Each species is illustrated by a careful drawing, and the descriptions of genera are clear and accurate.

The bibliographies prefixed to each species differ somewhat from the accepted usage in that they are restricted to the *Illinois* history of the species, and might in this way lead to confusion. Dr. Mosher's practice of reducing her citations simply to the surname of the author and year of publication certainly economizes space, but is almost *too* concise. A beginner might not always understand that "Michaux '03" and "Britton '07" belong to different centuries.

A more serious departure from generally accepted usage is found in the failure of the key to recognize the division of the grass family into tribes. As a result, the system of classification becomes somewhat arbitrary and empirical, and the beginner runs the risk of not apprehending the natural relationships of the genera. Doubtless if the determination of a particular

species in hand is the only end aimed at, the result may be attained more quickly by singling out some obvious but accidental character on which to base the process of dichotomy. To separate *Cenchrus*, for instance, from all other grasses because of its peculiar fruit may be the easiest way to identify it; but if the beginner as a result loses sight of the fact that *Cenchrus* has its exact place in a regular system of classification, and regards it as a sort of anomaly, then the work of the great post-Linnaean agrostologists has gone for naught, and we are relegated to the unsound and superficial methods of classification that prevailed in the time of the herbalists. It remained for Trinius and his successors to clear up the confused and mistaken ideas that prevailed as to the structure of the grass-flower, and make the *spikelet* the basis of all classification; and on this foundation modern agrostology solidly rests. To undo what has been done and invent a new system of classification founded on some other basis is to attempt a disastrous innovation. It is beside the point to argue that the beginner finds the natural system too difficult. If proper care is taken at first, it is as easy to learn scientific methods as unscientific. Is it more difficult for the student to apprehend the distinction between the two sub-families Panicoideae and Pooideae than it is to be asked to consider the tribe Hordeae as set off from all the rest of the family by the form of its inflorescence? There is a science of classification, just as there is a science of morphology; to ignore it in the one case and insist on it in the other will result in a fatal inconsistency, and in an inability to grasp the true meaning of scientific method.

J. C. NELSON.

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

APRIL 24, 1918

The meeting was held in the Museum building of the New York Botanical Garden at 3:30 P.M. Vice-president Barnhart presided. There were twenty-one persons present. The minutes of March 27 and April 9 were read and approved.